



Cultivating Donor Relationships In The Nonprofit Community

Nonprofit professionals continuously search for potential donors who believe in the organization's mission and are willing to donate money to support it. All too often, however, the organization lacks an organized system to cultivate meaningful relationships with these individuals. This article provides some tips on developing, implementing, and monitoring an effective donor program.

1. If you do not currently possess some type of donor software, research different software programs and select the program that best fits the needs of your organization. This software should have a database that makes it easy for you to enter donor contact information, the date and amount of all of their donations, a tickler system that reminds you when to solicit future donations, etc. I recommend that you also develop and advertise different levels of donorship. For example, you might have one level for individuals who donate \$99 or less per year, a second level for individuals who donate between \$100 - \$499 per year, and a third level for individuals who donate over \$500 per year. The higher the contribution, the more attention you should pay to cultivating a long-lasting relationship with the donor.
2. To find donors, seek out those individuals and companies that are passionate about your mission. For example, if your organization serves children with disabilities, target the parents and families of these children; teachers, service providers, and doctors who work with them; companies that make products for them; and so forth. As donors are identified and recruited, make sure they are entered into your database.
3. Once you secure a donor, be sure to thank them for their donation. Besides verbally acknowledging the donation, it is a good idea to send a formal thank you letter, with information related to their donation being tax deductible for federal income tax purposes. If you personally know the donor, it is recommended that you write a personal note on the formal letter, thanking them again for their generous donation. You can also thank donors by listing their names in your newsletter, on your website, in your annual report, or at special events.
4. Make sure that you don't lose touch with your donors. Once they make a donation and are entered into your database, ask for future donations on a regular basis. In asking for donations, continuously educate them about the organization, its programs and services, how their donations are benefiting clients, and other information that will help them understand how important their donations are. The more they know about the organization and how it helps its clients, the more apt they are to continue making donations. For higher level donors, explore other ways to reach out to them. You might take them out to lunch or do something else that makes them feel appreciated and special.

5. Involve your donors in as many organizational activities/events as possible. Send them invitations to trainings, fundraising or other events, and other activities designed to educate and involve them with the organization. The more they know about your organization and how it helps your clients, the more apt they are to continue making donations.

6. Use your existing donors to bring in new donors. They may have family members, friends, or colleagues who are also interested in your mission. Current donors who are passionate about your mission will be happy to solicit new donors. To make this activity fun, you can always host a contest. The donor, who secures the highest number of new donors over a specific time, will receive some type of certificate or gift.

Developing and cultivating relationships with donors is important to any nonprofit organization. Nonprofits should allocate time to solicit donors who are passionate about the organization's mission, explore a variety of ways to thank them for their contributions, maintain ongoing contact with them, involve them in organizational activities, and encourage them to bring in new donors. The more you focus on developing meaningful relationships with your donors, the more apt they are to contribute, and get involved with and promote the organization.

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If you want to make positive changes in your professional life, and create the job or career you desire and deserve, then working with Executive & Life Coach, Sharon L. Mikrut, is the solution. Although her specialty is in partnering with nonprofit executive directors and managers to maximize their resources in a competitive environment, she is passionate about working with all individuals committed to personal and/or professional growth. Visit her website at <http://www.createitcoaching.org> or Nonprofit Professionals blog at <http://www.createitcoaching.com>, and sign up for her free monthly newsletter that provides information and resources designed to help you manage your nonprofit organization in a more effective and efficient manner. You can also visit her Empowerment blog at <http://www.createitcoaching.net>, and sign up for her free monthly life coaching newsletter.